

# Inspection of Valley Park School

Huntsman Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DT

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Inspection dates:	28 and 29 January 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

The head of this school is David Jones. This school is part of the Valley Invicta Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Richard Hayden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Matthew Fletcher.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are proud to say that 'We are Valley Park' and act out the school's values of 'ambition, respect and kindness'. Pupils agree that the school is a happy and welcoming place to be. Pupils and sixth-form students have warm relationships with adults built on mutual respect and trust. Pupils respond well to the high expectations that the school has for their achievement.

Raised expectations of pupils' behaviour have had a positive impact across the school. Pupils, staff and parents all say the school is now calm and orderly. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. The school provides strong pastoral support. Staff make sure that help is available if pupils need it. For example, the school offers mental health support and counselling. There is encouragement and support for pupils to attend well.

Pupils are provided with a wealth of opportunities to nurture existing talents and interests and discover new ones. Performing arts clubs are popular, and many pupils show enthusiasm for taking part in music and drama performances. The school offers an array of trips and visits, including to Borneo and Milan. The school ensures that every pupil has the opportunity to benefit from these rich experiences.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

There are high aspirations for the pupils and students at Valley Park. The school acted swiftly and decisively in making the necessary improvements in response to the lower-than-national GCSE results in 2024. It has strengthened the quality of education provided, reshaping and enhancing the curriculum to ensure it is ambitious for all. Pupils remember key knowledge, particularly in recent lessons and programmes of study. As a result, pupils are now making better progress than has been the case historically.

The curriculum has been designed so that pupils' knowledge builds logically and sequentially. Most pupils benefit from adaptations to the curriculum, which enable them to build their knowledge. Occasionally, the pupils who are ready for more demanding work are not given work that stretches them appropriately. This means some pupils are not achieving as highly as they could.

In most lessons, the curriculum is delivered well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Pupils try hard and take pride in their work. The school has recently adapted its approach to checking on pupils' learning. It has ensured that teachers in all subjects carefully check how much pupils have understood over time. The information from these checks is used well to inform future teaching. However, the checks some teachers make on pupils' learning during lessons are not effective enough. This means sometimes they do not identify or address misconceptions, which hinders pupils' understanding of curriculum content.

Sixth-form students appreciate the wide range of subjects they can choose to study at key stage 5. Staff help students to choose appropriate courses that meet their individual

needs. This includes a range of vocational courses that appeal to students' interests and help to prepare them for their future lives and work. Sixth-form students are mature and articulate. They talk with confidence and enthusiasm about their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly identified. Each pupil with SEND has an individual 'student profile' giving clear information and guidance about how best to meet their needs. This information is well communicated to staff. As a result, pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers.

The school ensures that reading is a priority. It provides a dedicated programme to help pupils who struggle to read gain the skills they need. Sixth-form students act as reading mentors for key stage 3 pupils. As a result, pupils develop greater fluency and confidence in reading.

A comprehensive programme has been designed to support pupils' personal development. Some parts of this programme, such as the careers guidance pupils receive, are well established and of high quality. Pupils and sixth-form students talk positively about taking part in work experience and learning about a range of further education opportunities and apprenticeships. Other parts of the personal development programme have developed more recently. This includes the curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school has redesigned and greatly improved this curriculum, but it recognises there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding that need addressing, particularly about issues such as democracy and the rule of law.

The school is led very well. Trustees and governors are highly skilled and fulfil their duties well. All staff are unified in their vision for the school. Leaders support staff with their well-being and workload. Staff are overwhelmingly happy and proud to work at this school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some teachers do not consistently check pupils' learning well enough in lessons. As a result, some misconceptions or gaps in knowledge go unnoticed. The school should ensure that the best practice is shared so that all staff are confident in checking pupils' understanding at the point of learning and adapting learning accordingly.
- Sometimes, teaching is not adapted to the needs of all pupils. As a result, there are times when pupils are ready to move on in their learning, but they are not provided with opportunities to do so. The school needs to embed approaches to adaptive teaching so that the achievement of all pupils is raised.
- Some pupils have a limited understanding of some essential content included in the

school's PSHE curriculum, including democracy and the rule of law. This means pupils do not always have the knowledge they need in readiness for life in school and the world beyond school. The school must ensure that the teaching of the PSHE curriculum addresses any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136581
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10362393
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,651
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	308
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Matthew Fletcher
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Richard Hayden
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Jones
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.valleypark.viat.org.uk">www.valleypark.viat.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	4 and 5 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

## Information about this school

- The school meets the requirement of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, a range of staff, pupils, members of the local school board and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, art and design and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a member of staff at two alternative provisions.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential online staff survey. They took account of the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors considered the views of pupils shared in the confidential online pupil survey and through discussions held with pupils throughout the school.

## **Inspection team**

Ann Fearon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Boddington	Ofsted Inspector
John Burridge	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Doherty	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Mortimore	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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